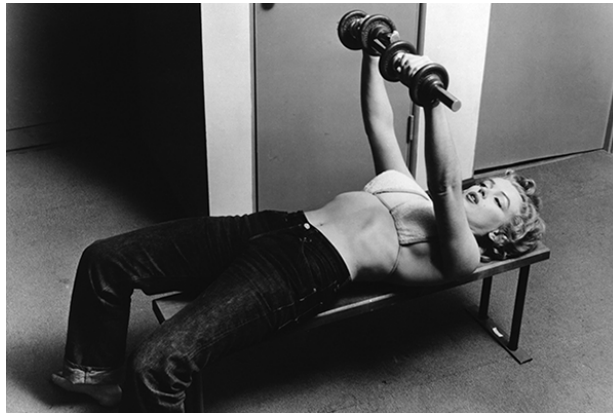


Why Weight Lifting Isn't Just for Boys (and Is Probably the Fitness Secret Your Body's Been Missing)

WANT TO BE HARDER, BETTER, AND FASTER? FIRST, YOU
HAVE TO GET STRONGER!

by *Sharon Feiereisen*



See? Even iconic beauties like Marilyn Monroe do it!
Photo: Philippe Halsman/Magnum Photos

Judging by all the **latest fitness trends**, it'd be easy to think the answer to getting an athletic, toned physique is by doing back-to-back cycling classes or **hitting the ballet barre**. But, in reality, that couldn't be further from the truth. While these classes are excellent for getting and staying in shape, they work even better when they're paired with a solid strength training plan.

"Resistance training or lifting is a key factor in programs for girls, especially if they're looking looking to lean out," explains celebrity trainer Will Torres, founder of **Willspace**, a high-end personal training facility. "The only way to become leaner is to reduce body fat and increase muscle tone," he explains. And, even though it seems counterintuitive, the best way to do that is with weights.

Cardio is not always the answer.

Sure, you may think lifting is just for boys. According to Torres, that's a common

misconception most girls have. In fact, many women think cardio is the sole answer to getting fit, but aerobic activity alone can actually *slow* your metabolism (during the process, your body breaks down both fat and muscle for energy, which is bad since muscle burns calories a lot faster than fat). The other thing about only doing cardio, Torres notes, is that you're only developing the group of muscles involved in that singular activity—there's no balance created throughout the body. For example, spinning is a quadricep-dominant activity, which means the upper legs get more work and development than the glutes and hamstrings. To create balance, Torres suggests including lifting movements like back bridges and deadlifts to further develop that area of the body. Doing so will make you stronger, tone the legs in a more holistic way, and will also prevent you from injuries.

Muscles are, in fact, a very good thing.

We already touched on this, but it's worth repeating: The more muscle mass you have, the more calories and fat you burn (and continue to burn even after you workout). That means you'll be burning even when you're lazily lounging on your couch catching up on *Pretty Little Liars*, or even when you're sleeping/*vamping*.

And, no, muscles do not mean bulky bodies. (Unless you want them to!)

For most of the fairer sex, it's very difficult to bulk up simply because we have more estrogen than testosterone (and higher testosterone levels increase muscle mass). "For girls who put on muscle easily and naturally have a more athletic build, I would incorporate lighter weights with higher repetitions in addition to heavier weight workouts," says Loren Bassett, founder of Bassett's Boot Camp and the brains behind *PXT at Pure Yoga*.

But how do I even get started?

We're constantly visiting the *Tone It Up* website for workout tips, since the masterminds behind it (Katrina and Karena) are two young, stylish girls who clearly have a handle on a healthy lifestyle.

In fact, Katrina has an amazing kettlebell series that's perfect for beginners. (*Karlie Kloss is a fan of*

this kind of workout, FYI.) Basically, they're just weights with a handle, so you can incorporate them into moves you already know (or could easily learn) like squats, sit-ups, and arm work. Plus, since there are no machines necessary, you can even keep them under your bed and squeeze in 20 minutes of weights whenever you have time—no gym necessary!

How often you break them out depends entirely on the rest of your routine. If you're doing cardio five days a week, you should aim to add some weight work afterwards.

When you *do* start with the weights, eat accordingly!

Clearly there is a delicate balance of workout, diet, and recovery when it comes to achieving an athletic physique. While aimlessly upping your calorie intake obviously isn't the answer, dieting isn't exactly what you want to be doing, either. "Girls often make the mistake of thinking that they should simply eat less when they work out, but that can totally backfire," says nutritionist and founder of [Eat Strong](#), Sophie Pachella. "In reality, healthy, lean muscle mass can only be built with protein. In fact, protein is crucial for fueling workouts—if you don't get enough, you'll lose muscle mass!" Torres recommends having a drink that has about 20 grams of carbohydrates and 10-15 grams of protein. A liquid drink, he says, will digest and get nutrients to your muscles much faster than eating a meal (an estimated 30 minutes versus 4 hours).

Of course, you may be worried about the opposite happening when you start lifting—your appetite might go into *major* overdrive and you might start eating more without realizing. "You need to pick the right foods when you're hungry, otherwise you will see a rise in weight," Torres says. "That means avoiding unnecessary sugar!" Make sure to also get ample doses of healthy proteins by eating fish and chicken.

You'll also want to remember to drink lots of water. "Keep a gallon in your kitchen and drink it every time you pass by, even if you're not thirsty," says Bassett. You should also keep an extra bottle in

your locker at school or in your dorm room so you can easily fill up and monitor your intake!

Do you have any questions about how to get started? Leave them in the comments below and we'll get back to you!

NORIEAH ANDIS



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